28: Spiro--81 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 842 Ifalik

"Physiological paternity, though vague and ill-defined, is recognized in Ifaluk. Pregnancy is the resultant of two causes--sexual intercourse and the intervention of Aluelap. If the couple are in love ('like too much'), then Aluelap will intervene when the semen enters the womb, and he will 'give baby.' On the other hand, if the couple are not in love, then despite sexual intercourse, and despite the fact the the semen may enter the womb, the woman will not become pregnant because Aluelap will not intervene. Thus we see that sexual intercourse is a necessary, but not a sufficient cause of pregnancy. Sexual intercourse is necessary in native birth theory, however, is indubitable. Every adult with whom I spoke, without exception, maintained that without intercourse, there could be no pregnancy. The additional factor--the intervention of Aluelap--helps explain why some women are barren, or why not every act of intercourse results in pregnancy. It further explains why a casual relationship will not result in conception, for any non-institutionalized sexual relationship--either in marriage or in the institution known as the gamar, will not produce children, because Aluelap will not intervene."

28: Spiro--81 [2]
116, 842, 855

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"With the birth of the first child another factor appears that may effect any future pregnancy. If the parents had mistreated their first child, had not satisfied its needs, Aluelap deems them incapable of raising children, and will not give them any more."

28: Spiro--81 [4] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 842 Ifalik

"Assuming that Aluelap is favorably disposed, conception begins when the semen mixes with the mother's vaginal blood. The baby being thought of as a mass of water and blood. By the end of the third month, the head is formed, and soon after, the body begins to assume shape. The natives recognize a nine month pregnancy, and could remember no case of a premature birth. Since a two month cease of the menstrual flow is taken as a sign of pregnancy, it is a simple matter for them to know of the nine month period of gestation."

28: Spiro--81 [5] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 842 Ifalik

"Babies are preeminently desired, probably more than any other single thing, so that a couple that does not have children is greatly pitied. But it is not only pity, but sadness which the people feel towards a barren woman (ulut) -- 'all people very sad, for no have baby, by'mby no more people.'"

28: Spiro--82
116, 842, 843

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"This great love of infants and the ardent desire to have babies may account for the relative absence of psychosomatic disturbances on the part of the pregnant mother. Neither my informants nor my direct questioning of pregnant women revealed any minor physical inconvenience, nor feelings of nausea."

28: Spiro--82 [4]
116, 842

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Contraceptives are unknown, and if they were known they would probably not be used, since babies are desired, not avoided."

28: Spiro--83 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians-1-2
116, 842, 827 Ifalik

"As between boys and girls, the latter are preferable. At first my informants said that there was no preference, but then qualified this equality by saying that 'boy more down,' expressing relative value in spatial terms, as they are wont to do. They all agreed that 'boy more down' because the girls can have babies (when they become mature, of course) but the boys cannot, and this was the decisive factor. When discussing the relative status of men and women the same response was given by still other informants. Women are more important than men because they can bear children. This emphasized, again, the great importance and value of children. (3)"

"3. [See following sheet for footnote 3.]"

28: Spiro--83 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians-2
116, 842, 827 Ifalik

"3. [Footnote p. 83] One can also question the native's actual knowledge of physiological paternity from this statement. For though it is true that only the women bear the children, the men play an equally important role in conception, which they seem to completely overlook in this regard. In a discussion of the relative status of the sexes with still other informants, I pointed out that the child-bearing role of women is paralleled, by their own theories, by the procreative powers of the men. They all looked surprised, as if the thought had not occured to them, and finally Arogeirox exclaimed, 'You talk true', and they then changed their evaluation, and said that men are more important. The next day my informants returned to this point, and praised me for my--to them--very acute observation.

But this disregard of the man's role in procreation in the context of this stiuation is not the only reason that leads one to question their fundamental knowledge of physiological paternity. In the mythology, it will be recalled that Legobub, the primordial goddess, gave birth to three children, without having a male consort. This 'virgin birth' is not interpreted as a miracle, a prerogative of the supernaturals, but rather accepted without question.

It is possible that their knowledge of physiological paternity has been borrowed since contact, and has not become integrated into the indigenous belief. But this theory is entirely speculative, there being no way to establish it."

28: Spiro--93
116, 842, 854

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Infants are not only greatly desired, as we have already seen, but they are given the greatest care and indulgence possible. The infant is idealized to the point that its over-indulgence and pampering become phantasties from the standpoint of Western standards. We have seen that no infant is ever left alone, day or night, asleep or awake, until it can walk. To isolate a baby would be to commit a major atrocity, for if a baby is left alone, 'by and by dies, no more people.'

Should an infant cry, it is immediately picked up in an adult's arms, coddled, consoled or fed. Thus the baby is in a state of almost complete dependence on the adults about it. This oversolicitude extends to the two and three year olds as well, assuming that another baby has not entered the household. Should the baby fall, and begin to cry, he is immediately picked up."

28: Spiro--96 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 842, 864, 857 Ifalik

"Children begin to ask questions about this time, and the parents or adults usually answer them realistically, there being no body of knowledge that is concealed from them. Questions concerning the mystery of birth, either their own or of others, occur, according to some informants, but not according to others. In a study of all children in the island, it was revealed that none had any conscious conception of childbirth and conception, and none had ever asked their parents. This survey was substantiated by a number of adult informants who insisted that their children had never asked. On the other hand, at least one man claimed that his children did ask, and that he had explained to them the processes of conception and childbirth. The adult informants who claimed that their children had not inquired into human parenthood, asserted that they did inquire into animal parenthood, in which case the parents were evasive. When the child asked where a dog, for example had come from, they would answer that it had come from Rauau or Felarik, (naming various districts in the island.) If this answer did not satisfy the child, and he attempted to probe further, he was rebuked, and told to stop inquiring further into the matter. ('What you talk about to me? You stop. You no talk about that.')

On all other questions however, the children are given the available information, if there is information. On the other hand, if the parents don't know, they discourage the child from probing. For example, children who ask about the creation or function of heavenly bodies, or other natural phenomena, such as the wind: 'You ask me? Me savvy? Very bad talk, I no savvy.'"

"The children's ideas concerning birth and conception are either private phantasies, or they are ignorant of them completely. Children and young people both, seem to be ignorant of sexual matters, insisting that they have never asked their parents or other adults the answers to the two questions that I asked them. Some of them were embarassed by the questions, but most of them simply confessed their ignorance, and admitted to a lack of curiosity concerning the matters.

A poll of 40 children between the ages of four to sixteen or seventeen reveals the following results.

Table 4

Theories of Conception

Theory	No. of children
Intercourse	3
Food	3
Man	3
Chiefs	2
Good alus	2
Woman	2
Child	1
Ignorance	24

Their phantasies are most interesting, and we shall indicate them briefly. Of the three who attributed conception to intercourse, only one mentioned the semen. One said the woman's blood creates the baby, the other said that the mother's blood and the good alus create the baby. [119]

Of the three that said that the baby is created from food, one said that the husband gives his wife food to eat, from which the baby is created, whilst the others said that it is created from her own food, not mentioning the husband.

Of the two answering, man, one said the husband cuts his wife's stomach with a knife and places the baby inside. The other said that three men make a doll from a stick, which then becomes a baby.

Of the two answering, woman, one said that all women have babies inside their bodies, but they become alive only when they marry.

Most of the children, however, simply did not know how babies were made, nor were they curious to know. They had never asked anyone. The same is true of the baby's birth. Most were ignorant of the birth of a baby. There were some who had ideas, however, which are shown in table 5.

Table 5
Children's Birth Theories

Theory of Birth	No. of Subjects
Vagina	8
Anus	5
Stomach	3
Mouth	1
Ear	1
Navel	1
Ignorance	23"

41: Bates & Abbott N-5 (1953) 1958
OR21 Woleai OR21
Ifaluk

whether they died in infancy (before they could walk) or later. The ninety-two women of childbearing age or older had had 255 children, of which 151 were still living. Of the 104 deaths, sixty were either stillbirths or infant deaths, which is a high infant mortality by modern Western standards, though probably lower than that of most of the crowded Oriental civilizations.

The menstrual history of every woman was public knowledge on Ifaluk because of the custom of retiring to the menstrual huts. Tufai for a woman, then, has the definite meaning that she has passed menopause, has completed her reproductive history. We got the reproductive history of twenty-eight of these elderly ladies. They had born a total of eighty children, or an average of 2.8 each. Eight of them had had no children; one of them had had ten; most had had two, three or four.

The Ifalukians, like most people who lack a written language or system of records, had amazing memories, and I think that our histories for these women are reasonably accurate. It is difficult to interpret them precisely, of course, because of our lack of data on movement to and away from the island, and the like. Clearly, however, the population is hardly maintaining itself. The Ifalukians loved children, seemed always to want children. I could not, however, get away from a suspicion that the low birth rate reflected some sort of deliberate contraceptive or control practice, beyond such conventional taboos as the prohibition of sexual intercourse during periods of fishing. The language problem, the delicacy of the subject and our reluctance to appear to be prying into personal matters, prevented us from getting any definite information.

The population question in the Pacific is a matter of general concern. All of the islands—Polynesian, Micronesian, Melanesian—showed a great decline in population through the 19th century. The islands had probably been almost free of contagious disease before the explorers, traders, whalers and other Westerners started roaming the Pacific, bringing smallpox, measles, venereal diseases, tuberculosis and the like along with them.

The consequences were devastating, and only in recent years have introduced medicine and sanitation started to counteract the effect of the introduced diseases. Until quite recently, I suspect that most cul-